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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for producing ~~temporarily~~ reversibly crosslinked cellulose ethers having lump-free stirrability and solvation delay on stirring into aqueous solutions, in which cellulose ethers having free OH groups are first admixed in water or in an organic suspension medium at a temperature in the range from 0 to 40 °C with chemical compounds containing at least one aldehyde group and at least one acid group, and in which the acid groups and aldehyde groups of the chemical compounds are then reacted with the OH groups of the cellulose ethers to form an ester bond or hemiacetal bond, the cellulose ether not being dissolved in the water or the suspension medium.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the chemical compound having at least one acid group and at least one aldehyde group is a compound of the general chemical formula



where X is a divalent alkylene group which has from 1 to 6 carbon atoms and can be saturated and straight-chain or branched, or a divalent saturated cyclo- or bicycloalkylene group having from 3 to 10 carbon atoms, or a divalent arylene group having from 6 to 10 carbon atoms, where these groups can further bear one or more substituents R which, in addition to hydrogen, can also be alkyl radicals having up to 4 carbon atoms, alkoxy radicals having up to 4 carbon

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atoms, OH groups, halogens, nitro groups, nitrile groups or mixtures thereof, and where y can be either 0, 1 or 2.

4. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the chemical compound having at least one acid group and at least one aldehyde group is glyoxylic acid.

5. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the amount of chemical compound containing at least one aldehyde group and at least one acid group is in the range from 0.01 to 0.1 mol per mole of cellulose ether.

6. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the cellulose ethers having free OH groups are selected from methylcellulose, ethylcellulose, carboxymethylcellulose, hydroxyethylcellulose, hydroxypropylcellulose, methylhydroxyethylcellulose, methylhydroxypropylcellulose or ethylhydroxyethylcellulose.

7. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the cellulose ethers are admixed with the compound containing at least one aldehyde group and at least one acid group over a time period in the range of from 10 to 60 min.

8. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the acid groups and the aldehyde groups are reacted with the OH groups of the cellulose ethers at a temperature in the range from 50 to 150 °C over a time period in the range of from 1 to 120 min.

9. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the cellulose ethers are first admixed in organic suspension media selected from acetone, lower alcohols having from 1 to 4 carbon atoms, diethyl ether, ethers having alkyl chains having up to 8 carbon atoms per chain, cyclic ethers, ethylene glycol dimethyl ether, diethylene glycol dimethyl ether, triethylene glycol dimethyl ether, tetraethylene glycol dimethyl ether, straight-chain and branched

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hydrocarbons having up to 12 carbon atoms, cyclic hydrocarbon compounds, or aromatic hydrocarbon compounds.

10. (Canceled)

11. (Previously Presented) A method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the cellulose ether is moistened with 10 to 80 % water, based on the amount of cellulose ether, or suspended in 30 to 60% organic suspension medium, based on the amount of cellulose ether.

12. (New) A method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the chemical compounds containing at least one aldehyde group and at least one acid group are not released upon dissolving said reversibly crosslinked cellulose ether in a neutral or weakly acidic aqueous solution.